



Fireweed

60p



Writers and Readers
Publishing Cooperative

Fireweed is a quarterly magazine of working-class and socialist arts.

Contributions (enclosing s.a.e.) should be sent to the Editors at 107 Bowerham Road, Lancaster.

Fireweed is published by the Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative, 14 Talacre Road, London NW5 3PE, to whom subscriptions should be sent.

(Subscription form on page 63)

Business Editor: Richard Appignanesi

Copyright remains with the contributor

Designed and printed by Expression Printers Ltd, London N1

Our thanks are due for assistance from:

North-west Arts

The students of Lancaster University

Musicians' Union

National Union of Public Employees

National Union of Agricultural & Allied Workers

(Yorkshire County Committee)

'Fireweed' is the American name for rose-bay willow herb, a flowering weed that spreads across waste land.

Contents

E2
Skull 19.
4

Archie Hill	The Iron Moulders	3
Alan Heaps	Ravenhead	12
✓ Pablo Neruda	The People, translated by Alastair Reid	14
	José Cruz Achachalla translated by A L Lloyd	19
Ken Campbell	The Great Caper (photos by Mick Rock)	21
Colin Yates	Kearsley Power Station, Mill, and Prestolee Canal	32
✓ David Craig	The Two Coasts, Lament, The Very Latest Pigeon Poem and Old Man in Moor Lane	34
Andy Andrews	A Cautionary Tale	38
David Bates	The Gravel Sifter and The Cement Mixer	40
Margaret Parkinson	Jackie	43
Archie Hill	Skid Row	54
Leon Rosselson	Perspectives and Tim McGuire	56
✓ Bertolt Brecht	The Difficulties of Governing On Hearing the News and I, the Survivor translated by Christine Diggins	60

The Iron Moulders

Archie Hill

Ernie broke away from a dream and came to Monday morning. Monday morning, and school was over and done with forever, and today was the day that he started work for the very first time. He savoured the thought and the freedom, then leaned out to the old cane-bottomed chair which held his brand new working clothes. The overalls were shiny starched, their buckles gleaming, and the boots were stiff and heavy. They had to be paid for weekly, and would be worn out before they were paid for. He drew the overalls on, shivering in the bedroom coldness. His brother snored on with two more years of schooling stored against the future. Ernie tapped on his father's bedroom door, heard his dad fumble with the battered oxo tin in which he kept his tobacco, and roll the first cough-making cigarette of the day.

He crept downstairs and into the kitchen, boiled the kettle and poured scalding water into the teapot. His father creaked down the passage, grunted his weight into a rickety chair, fumbled at his boot laces while muttering for Ernie to pour him a mug of tea. Ernie poured it, thick and brown, tempered with condensed milk and heaped spoons of sugar. The man slurped it down, nodded for a refill.

"What's to eat?" Ernie asked, "I mean for now. You want something now?"

"Ar. Cut us a piece of jam," Mr Brewer acknowledged, "that 'ull do to fill the breakfuss' hole. There's some bacon in the pantry sill which we can tek to work for snap time. Take some margarine with it or a pat of lard — we can cook it on a shovel down at the foundry. Me tea can's in me bag, for a brew up."

They left the house together, stepping out into the cold morning. A weak sun had given up an unequal struggle, had gone away behind the dark clouds. They walked down to the foundry at the end of the dismal street, and Ernie self-consciously stamped his time card at the clock before

following his father into the yard. He stood looking into the huge foundry, a vast barn with high windows and a carpet of thick grey dust on the floor. He felt the faintest whisper of depression breathe across his mind as he saw the dry dead inhospitability of the place, saw the many small work benches among the piles of black moulding sand, the worn shovels and the mounds of scrap iron waiting for the moulders' labourers. Over everything came a high monotonous rumbling, a sound that mixed with the very air.

"Them's the barrels yo' can hear," shouted Mr Brewer, "that's wheer the castings go to get annealed. Ah'll show yo' round when ah'n got me work stall ready." He moved away and left Ernie standing there. At the far end of the foundry shop was a huge furnace, a great cylinder that thrust through the roof of the building like a space probe rocket shouting up from its launching pad. Two men in donkey-jackets worked on it, wrenching and heaving with long iron bars, tearing green and yellow slag away. Another man drummed a sled hammer at a frozen green sea of glass-like slag which had erupted from the furnace jaws the afternoon before, and had congealed into frozen waves and ripples. Now the furnace had to be cleaned and toileted for the work to come. Cold and silent it stood, waiting for fire to be lit in its belly to give it strength again.

Mr Brewer returned through the grey dust with another man.

"This him, then?" the man asked. "He's not very big, is he. A little 'un."

"He'll fill out once he's pushed a barrer for a bit," answered Mr Brewer, "he'll harden to the wek like the rest on us."

"So you'm going to be an iron moulder, eh son?", the man said to Ernie, "Ah reckons you' wants your head looking to. Anyroad, ah'll tell you what — work with your dad a couple of days til you get the hang of things." The

foreman went away, and Ernie looked with increasing dismay about him.

"Don't stand staring at it," his dad snapped, "go and get a barrer and clean my work stall up to start with." Ernie fetched the wheel barrow, feeling it big and clumsy against his balance. His father produced a sieve, shovelled grey sand into it from the floor. "Riddle it like this, see," he explained. "Save the bits of metal and shove it in that iron pan. When its full, take it down to the cupulo — that's the furnace. When the barrer's full of sand, go and tip it on the pile outside. Alright, then?"

Ernie slogged at the task. Dust powdered his face and hair, clogged his nostrils. After a while, when he spat, the spittle itself was black.

"Bit o' dust won't hurt," said his father, "you'll get used to it." Ernie took pan after pan of salvaged iron to the furnace, making the journey so frequently that his hands blistered and left sore flesh covering bewildered muscles. He wrapped his sweat rag round the soreness.

"You'll never toughen up, that road," his father jeered, "Yo'll be wearing gloves next."

Ernie plodded on. All round him in the foundry shop the lean men worked at their benches, making the moulds which earned their livings. The men seemed to sway from the waists only, their legs solidly anchored to the floor. There was a neat compactness about them, about their movements — an economy. They bent from the waist to shovel black sand into the moulding flasks, an above-waist swaying as they squeezed and rammed, a flexing of shoulder muscles as they pulled the levers to force compression; then a quick sure flurry of full movement as they added the finished mould to the increasing rows laid out on the floor. The men whistled at their work, called out to each other in ribald language. The sun straggled from behind the clouds and streamed in through

broken window panes, making searchlight patterns and patiways through the dust-infested air. When the lunch-time hooter blew, Ernie was tired and weary. He already pined for the safe security of school and classroom which could never come again.

"Get the snap out 'n my bag," his father said, "and we'll cook it down the ovens."

Ernie got the bread and bacon, the blob of margarine, while his father cleaned his shovel with waste rag. They went to the annealing ovens by the canal wharf. The ovens were huge, a double row, eight feet wide, nine high, twenty long. Running the full length of each oven were fire chutes. When the moulders had finished their castings, the wares were packed into metal barrels with red-lead gravel, and placed in tiers inside the ovens. Then the mouths of the ovens were bricked over and clay-skinned, the chutes were packed with coal and fired so that the heat built up into great intensity for the annealing process to take place. Mr Brewer chose one of the ovens which had been broken open for final cooling, raked the glowing coals together and placed the tea can among them. Then he put the margarine on the blade of his shovel, laid the strips of bacon on top, sizzled them over the heat. When it was cooked he made thick wedged sandwiches, added tea to the boiling water. The two of them drew wheel barrows up to the warmth, sat in them like arm-chairs, ate with relish the efficient meal. Mr Brewer dozed, content for a little while . . .

. . . and then the resume work hooter shrieked out against time and space and Ernie dragged his reluctant body and mind back to the work. Already he knew that he hated the iron works, hated the rough hard work and the dry marrow-sucking dust; his mind raced ahead and froze out the future with better images, replaced the oppressive Now of things with dreamings beyond the grip of iron and the witherings

of personal freedom and ambitions. His soul rebelled against it all, the dryness and dust and dead iron, creaking machinery and strange men who methodically and deliberately slaved their lives away.

"Put a move on," he heard his father shout, "get this sand out'n my way. Ah'm behind as it is." Ernie shovelled the spilling sand into the barrow, wheeled it to the tip and hefted the load upwards so that it flowed onto the increasing pile. Back into the shop for another load, and another, and another. His hands were sore, his body tired; but there were work beds to clear, scrap iron to stack at the furnace, barrows to push and the bulk of the day's work yet to come.

The furnace itself had changed. The green scabs of slag had been prised away, the scarred mouth no longer oozed its frozen dribble. It grinned out sharp and clean now that its jaws and lips had been lined with fresh clay. Its belly rumbled quietly and contentedly as it digested its meal of limestone and coke, whilst high up on its platform side the two furnace-men stacked charges of pig iron ready for feeding into the great cylinder. Like a vast cuckoo, it was; ever gaping, every hungry.

The moulders had changed, too. They had tightened up. They no longer called to each other or whistled at their work, they tightened up and put on more job pressure. The little black boxes of sand grew and increased on the foundry floor, like the square droppings of some strange monster. The men were time-conscious now, quickening to make a fair day's allocation before the furnace should decree that they put down their shovels and be content with what they had made. The moulders' ladles were grouped round the furnace, so that the heat dried the fresh clay linings. To the rear of the furnace a long deep trench had been scooped in the floor, to accept the first waste pourings. Ernie was thankful for the few minutes' rest. A furnaceman peered at the gauges, then

went to the furnace mouth with an iron spear. He pushed it into the mouth, withdrew it with white hot metal adhering to its point. The other man stepped forwards with another iron pole, blocked the weeping mouth with a clay plug. They both seemed satisfied. One of them called down the foundry shop.

“Harold, Tom. Yo’, Jimmy — Fred and Bernie. Yo’ tek the slag off, right?”. The moulders nodded, blurs of motion at their benches as they raced the clock for an extra mould apiece. A bell pealed loud and clear, and the moulding tapered to a stop.

Now it became the time of the furnace.

Its rumbling could be heard like a moan of sea wind, beating waves of heat across the air. The men stooped down to it, took their ladles and clustered round the mouth. Each man had spats round his boots in case of splash-back. Left sleeves rolled down to protect skin from pitiless heat, right sleeves rolled high to grasp every stir of coolness. The furnaceman leaned out with his probe and picked the button plug of clay from the mouth. The opening glowed white hot, like a great angry eye in the dark shadows, and then a molten river started to flow down the clay-lined shoot. A moulder placed his pot under the stream, braced the long handle across his left knee, bearing down on the weight of it with his right hand. Another man put his ladle under the filled one, the first man pulled out from under as the other took over. Ladle after ladle was poured into the trench where it bubbled and sizzled like a sun gone mad. Then the good iron came through and the men collected it in their pots and scurried back to their work beds to pour the moulds. Sparks jumped and hissed the length and breadth of the foundry, the air was thick with sweat and heat, pungent iron and sickliness of sulphur. Ernie was dazed by it all, watching the red shadows burn against the walls, seeing the blue flames leap

from the moulds as gas formed and exploded. Sometimes a mould burst open, spilling its glowing contents, and a moulder would curse frantically and try to stem the escape by slapping sand against the fracture. The foundry was a nightmare of steam and smoke, with men running to and from the furnace with sweat bursting from their brows, breath gasping and fluttering in their ragged lungs.

"Gis a hand," shouted Mr Brewer, and Ernie went across to his father who sweated and glowed like a demon. "Don' just stand theer," he bellowed, "I'm all behind as it is. Here, do like ah show you." He raced to the row of poured moulds, picked one up by its base board, rushed back to the work bench and tipped the mould into the pile of black working sand. The casting inside glowed red and angry. "Chuck 'em up like that, see," said Mr Brewer, "Ah can pour six off one ladle. There's fifty to do altogether. Give the iron two or three minutes to settle then chuck 'em up like ah showed you. When you've chucked a dozen up, do it like this." He took a long pair of pincers and a heavy truncheon-like rapping bar, dug the pincers into the sand and dragged the casting out. Hot black dirt stuck to the iron's redness and Mr Brewer rapped it away with the bar, then laid the product to one side.

"Do it like that," he said, "only don't be too rough on 'em, they'm still on the soft side and you'll knock 'em out of shape, else." He disappeared into the steam and smoke to fetch another ladle of iron, leaving iron, leaving Ernie to struggle with the poured moulds. They were heavy and awkward and the heat of them sucked at him as he staggered to the bench to throw them up, then took pincers and rapping bar to make them clean. When he rapped the bar against them, great waves of nausea tore at him as sulphur and dust ate into his lungs. His scalp was prickly with heat, great globs of sweat ran down his thin back and thighs, life

itself sobbed for him to stop and lie down forever.

"Put yo'r back into it," he heard his father call, and Ernie pulled and tugged at the work. Run to the moulds one at a time, pick up, run to the work bench, throw up, run back for another. On and on and on, so that legs and arms and brain and lungs cried out from a terrifying numbness. Pincers and rapping bar, fish into the hot sand, rap and clean and drown in dust and sulphur, then up and do it all again.

Ernie whimpered, and hated the world of iron. His father returned with another ladle full, arguing backwards over his shoulders with another man.

"Yo' went out of turn," the man complained, "it wasn't you're turn to goo under."

"Sod you," retorted Mr Brewer, "yo'm allus moaning about someat."

"You'm not the only bloke as wants to get finished," the man flared, "yo' stand from under next time, and wait yo're turn." They went back to the furnace, still arguing. Ernie forced his will and limbs to come awake. He ached for the knocking off whistle, longed to shut his mind, longed for peace and the sanctuary of bed and sleep. He was terrified, deep inside, that all his years would be tied to this, that all his boyhood and manhood would be imprisoned forever in the black and the smoke and the crippling heat of the awful furnace. Tears of self-pity dried on his cheeks as heat drank the moisture away.

Down at the furnace someone screamed. A long-drawn-out hoarse scream of terror and unendurable pain. Then there were the shoutings of men and flurried movement as the furnaceman reached fowards and halted the work by plugging the molten mouth. Ernie went towards the furnace, stood a little way back, trying to see.

"He fell in," a moulder was saying, hysteria in his voice, "yo' saw him — he fell in the slag trench. It's still molten,

look. He was arguing with me about whose turn it was to goo under, and then he swings from me and slipped into the bloody trench." The serious men bunched together, frightened, while a terrible stench of burned meat hung everywhere. A creature almost not a man whined and threshed beyond the circle of light, covered by donkey jackets and cradled by two moulders.

"His legs am burned off," one man breathed, the sickness bubbling in his throat, "he went in knee deep, he did. He seemed to stand theer, stood up to his knees in it. O, my Christ".

Ernie moved closer, fear and curiosity propelling him. The men saw him coming, formed a barrier through which he could not see. "Goo on whum, me lover," the foreman said, "Go on home." Ernie did as he was told, glad to be finished with the day's work, glad to get away from it all . . .

"And tell yo're mom her's a wanted down at the office," the foreman shouted after him, "tell her to come to the office as quick as her can. Tell her it's urgent."

Ernie nodded, and sped up the foundry yard to the office lobby. It was only when he was punching his time card for clocking off that the truth suddenly exploded in his confused mind, and with a whimper of terror he threw the card on the floor and ran all the way home.

Alan Heaps 'Ravenhead'

Pablo Neruda

That man I remember well, and often I have
have passed since I last saw him, but I
he travelled neither on horseback nor
always on foot.
he would not look at me as I
the distance.
carrying neither sword nor weapon
but rests on his shoulder, even though he
axe or hammer or spade, but he had no
he never fought with his hands, but
his struggle was with the world, with the
with the wheat, for it to become bread,
with the towering tree, for it to yield wood,
with the towering tree, for it to yield wood,
with the towering tree, for it to yield wood,



The People

Pablo Neruda

That man I remember well, and at least two centuries
have passed since I last saw him;
he travelled neither on horseback nor in a carriage —
always on foot
he undid
the distances,
carrying neither sword nor weapon
but nets on his shoulder,
axe or hammer or spade;
he never fought with another of his kind —
his struggle was with water or with earth,
with the wheat, for it to become bread,
with the towering tree, for it to yield wood,
with walls, to open doors in them,
with sand, to form it into walls
and with the sea, to make it bear fruit.

I knew him and he goes on haunting me.

The carriages splintered into pieces,
war destroyed doorways and walls,
the city was a fistful of ashes,
all the dresses shivered into dust,
and for me, he persists,
he survives in the sand
where everything previously
seemed durable except him.

In the comings and goings of families,
sometimes he was my father or my relative,
or was almost him, or if not him perhaps
the other one who never came back home
because water or earth swallowed him,
a machine or a tree killed him,

or he was that funeral carpenter
who walked behind the coffin, dry-eyed,
someone who never had a name
except as wood or metal have names,
and on whom others looked from above,
not noticing the ant,
only the ant-hill;
so that when his feet no longer moved
because, poor and tired, he had died,
they never saw what they were not used to seeing —
already other feet walked in his footsteps.

The other feet were still him,
the other hands as well.
The man persisted.
When it seemed he must be spent,
he was the same man over again;
there he was again, digging the ground,
cutting cloth, but without a shirt,
he was there and he wasn't, just as before
he had gone away and replaced himself;
and since he never had cemetery
or tomb, or his name engraved
on the stone that he sweated to cut,
nobody ever knew of his arrival
and nobody knew when he died,
so only when the poor man was able
did he come back to life, unnoticed.

He was the man all right, with no inheritance,
no cattle, no coat of arms,
and he did not stand out from others,
others who were himself;
from above, he was gray, like clay,

The People

Pablo Neruda

like a river stone;
death carried him off downstream.

I who knew him saw him go down
until he existed only in what he was leaving —
streets he could scarcely be aware of,
houses he never never would inhabit.

And I come back to see him, and every day I wait.

I see him in his coffin and resurrected.

I pick him out from all
the others who are his equals
and it seems to me that this cannot be,
that this way leads us nowhere,
that to continue so has no glory.

I believe that Heaven must encompass
this man, properly shod and crowned.

I think that those who made so many things
ought to be owners of everything.

That those who made bread ought to eat.

That those in the mine should have light.

Enough now of gray men in chains!

Enough of the pale lost ones!

Not another man should pass except as a ruler.

he was drab, like leather,
he was yellow harvesting wheat,
he was black down in the mine,
stone-coloured in the castle,
in the fishing boat the colour of tuna,
horse-coloured on the prairies —
how could anyone distinguish him
if he were inseparable from his element,
earth, coal or sea in a man's form?

Where he lived, everything
the man touched would grow —
the hostile stones
broken
by his hands
took shape and line
and one by one assumed
the sharp forms of buildings;
he made bread with his hands,
set the trains running;
the distances filled with towns,
other men grew,
the bees arrived
and through the man's creating and multiplying,
spring wandered into the market place
between bakeries and doves.

The father of the loaves was forgotten,
the one who cut and trudged, beating
and opening paths, shifting sand;
when everything came into being, he no longer existed.
He gave away his existence, that was all.
He went somewhere else to work and ultimately
he went toward death, rolling

Not a single woman without her diadem.

Gloves of gold for every hand.

Fruits of the sun for all the shadowy ones!

I knew that man, and when I could,
when I still had eyes in my head,
when I still had a voice in my throat,
I sought him among the tombs and I said to him
pressing his arm that still was not dust:

"Everything will pass, you will still be living.

You set fire to life.

You made what is yours."

So let no one be perturbed when
I seem to be alone and am not alone;
I am not without company and I speak for all.

Someone is hearing me without knowing it,
but those I sing of, those who know,
go on being born and will overflow the world.

Translated by Alastair Reid

The poem, THE PEOPLE, comes from the volume, PLENOS PODERES, to be published in spring, 1975 by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, translated by Alastair Reid.

José Cruz Achachalla (miner, Bolivia)

Yes, señor, José Cruz Achachalla,
from the Sierra de Granito, south of Oruro.
My mother Rosalia
must be living there still:
she works for some gentlefolk,
you know, washes their clothes.
We were hungry, captain,
and with a little switch they beat
my mother every day.
That's why I became a miner.
I got away over the high sierras,
with a little coca leaf, señor,
a few branches on my head,
and I went on, went on, went on. Vultures
followed me in the sky
and I thought: They're better
than the white gentlefolk in Oruro,
and so I pushed on into the mining country.
That's now
forty years ago. I was just
a hungry boy then. The miners
took me in. I became an apprentice
and in the dark workings,
nail by nail against the earth
I picked out the hidden tin.
I don't know where or for what purpose
the silvery ingots go:
we live badly, houses falling in,
and hunger again, señor,
and when
we get together, captain,
for a peso more in pay,
the red wind, the truncheon, the fire,
the police beat us,

and so here I am, captain,
discharged from work,
tell me where to go,
nobody knows me in Oruro,
I am as old as the stones,
I can't cross the mountains now,
what am I to do on the roads?
I'm staying right here now,
they can bury me in the tin,
only the tin knows me.
José Cruz Achachalla, yes,
don't keep shifting your feet,
you've got there now, right there,
Achachalla, you're there now.

From *Canto General* (1950)
translated by A L Lloyd

The Great Caper

A Visionary Drama

Ken Campbell

Eugene Grimley is afflicted with an obsession to find his perfect woman. The prophet Will, abetted by his side-kick Stu, teaches him that sensible people are up a tree, and following the signs, leads him to Crumpetstrasse, Tel Aviv.

Part of Act 2

Twisting pathway to the Moon — Wolves, whales and the Pimply Flunkey.

Outside the Golan Cafe, Dizengoff, Tel Aviv — GENE, ION and STU sit at a table — STU is writing.



GENE: It is a very wary sort of crumpet here — you were right — it walks warily.

STU: It's a noisy crumpet.

GENE: It is a noisy crumpet — yes — but there is a wariness — every day I've sensed that more.

ION: Melissa — I found her in Epping Forest — or rather she found me — she was just like the crumpet here — very highly strung — when she got excited she used to prance at you and wet herself — sitting by the stream — she came bounding out of the trees — straight up to me and sniffed me in the fly.

GENE: Did you have relations with her?

ION: She was a ferret!

GENE: Oh! — Aviva the soldier girl.

ION: Yer, she had something — sitting at that table there, cradling her sten — stroking it like it was a cat.

GENE: But she hadn't got It — I sat there waiting to see if the voices contacted me — but they didn't — when was Aviva?

ION: Stu?

STU: Aviva?

ION: Yes.

STU: (*turning back the pages of his notebook*) O — she was over a week ago now — she was on the ninth day.

GENE: This morning.

ION: Yes?

GENE: I haven't felt that contact with the Voices since we've been here — but this morning.

STU: You did.

GENE: I felt that excitement.

STU: Listen what I've written — '... today has begun the 18th day of Grimley's vigil — Grimley is much changed — the seventeen days of waiting and watching for his Mary or Queen of Sheba or his Astarte or however we should refer to her, would seem to have tempered him — as the magick rituals not only prepare and temper the magickal paraphernalia but also the Magician.'

ION: Excellent!

STU: It's all right, is it? (*continues reading*) 'One has the confidence that when the moment arrives Grimley will be in full and functioning possession of his — '

ION: Marbles!

STU: 'Intellectual and emotional plant'.

ION: No, put 'marbles'.

STU: Really?

ION: Haha? Definitely!

STU: All right! And then I've mused on the significance of it being the 18th Day — The 18th card of the Tarot is The Moon — there's a twisting pathway to the Moon (all the trials and temptations) — on one side of the path there's the wolf — madness and violence — and on the other side there's a tame dog — the lure of domesticity — the path goes dangerously close to both but deviously escapes both.

ION: Travelling by Moonlight — reflected light — dream-light — distortion — weirdness.

STU: *(suddenly looking at high building opposite)*
It's a spiral, it's been a spiral and it's all just gone round one — I began with Ruth Harrison's book 'Animal Machines' — instantly moved by the degradation of life instanced by battery chickens, crated calves, sweatbox pigs, broiler lambs and the like I joined the Farm Wreckers — bombed piggeries — tore down obscene hen houses, etc — and then a need to find a more personal peace becoming pressing I retired from active service with the wreckers — subscribed to 'Here's Health' and a study of the Natural Life lured into active lobbying of Water Fluoridation with all its bollocks arguments about dental care but in fact, Fluoride, a vast and useless by-product of the Aluminium industry and the Nation's water a wonderful way of disposing of it leading in years to come to a poisoned earth but embraced by successive Governments as a wonderful cover for future water tamperings — as and when mass tranquilisation and human culling becomes vital to economic stability — shot in the left knee by undercover men from the Cadbury/Schweppes Group protecting the Rights of the Yet Unborn to suck themselves soppy on more and more sweets — recuperating then in the tranquil garden of Brown Rice Macro, but still not the Peace, and so on into mutual massage, primal screaming, hours of contemplation in Orgone Accumulators, and then to Acupuncture treatment and course of lectures — and then application of this on a broader front led me up Ley Lines and honorary secretary of the Gloucestershire Dowsers — but still a final peace and fulfilment elusive, and so on

into Tantrik Sexual Ecstasy Rituals, promising but interrupted by our sudden decision to drop all and come here, and here I am, in the Holy Land, and I look across the road and I see High Rise Human Batteries, if we look down the street back there we can see the top of the Hilton Luxury Battery, and if we cross the road we can glimpse the great Shalom Building Battery — and in Jaffa the last few free range Arab Slums being torn down for Intensive Human Hen Houses — and I'm back exactly where I was — or rather it is one full turn of the spiral and it's men now they're turning into machines — and I'm feeling the blood racing — and I'm thinking of my mates who make the bombs and wondering how they are and wouldn't it be nice to see them again — and I'm thinking how Architecture has always SAID something about the times — mirrored the times — and I've been looking across at those blocks for seventeen days trying to work out if they're saying anything and what it is and I've just this minute realised what it is and it's 'It's time to crate them up!' — and all the people pouring into the cities of the world — voluntarily entering battery life — when I worked on the Kfar Blum Kibbutz in '62 everybody always moaned about working in the hen-house — battery effort it was — but it was before I read the book — got switched on to the darker implications — anyway they all said the same thing: 'Chickens are so stupid!' — but the chickens that my dad kept during the war and just after — they weren't stupid — they were great animals — anyone'd go fucking stupid if he lived his entire life in a cupboard with two other geezers not of his own choosing shitting on his feet and an endless

Mantovani tape — Foul Flesh Units — and now the greatest mammal our planet's yet managed — whose deep water love call could be heard at distance in excess of 2,000 miles — Moby Dick: new name: Cat Food Developing Unit — an entire species tinned — and so to the crating of Humans — for what? — I itch to detonate — so I guess — they do — all big cities now tunnelled and mined and ready to blow as soon as optimum crating has been achieved — it's like your champagne bottle — you can see it straining.

GENE: But that didn't actually go off.

STU: It was a wise move on the pimply flunkey's part to dump it and run.

A Brain Damaged Pamphleteer

STU: To dump it and run.

ION: Say that again.

STU: To dump it and run.

ION: You didn't do it that time.

STU: Do what?

ION: You'll throw tea over me if I tell you.

STU: No I won't.

ION: Conservationists honour?

STU: O get on with it.

ION: The first time you did the exact gesture that Bruce Lee did at the climax of 'Way of the Dragon'.

(STU throws tea over ION.)

ION: As predicted.

STU: Well what a cunt thing to say — man has a vision and you bring it down to Bruce Lee — you really

get small and jealous don't you if anyone else has a vision.

ION: Bruce Lee SMALL!

STU: I'm thinking of knocking this whole game of soldiers on the head as it happens.

ION: O don't be so queeny.

STU: Queeny! — it's you who's queeny — fucking prophet — Granma Moses that's who you are!

GENE: Girls! Please!

ION: It was a good vision.

STU: O thank you.

ION: Or rather it was a good take off point for a vision — it certainly scratched the surface — but feel free to bugger off and be a hack brain-damaged pamphleteer — the Prince of Roneoed Gloom — Deep inside a planet is sick — Exterior manifestations on skin — boils, blisters, carbuncles, pustuls are signs that Deeper Disease has almost run its course — that curative process — people pouring into the cities is the poisons gathering for expulsion — in good time they will burst — or ooze away maybe in the night.

STU: Let's say it like it is — we picked up some deranged punk — took him over — drove him completely off his conk — and got him to pay for a sappy holiday for us all — if we just admit that we can sod the whole nonsense and all go snorkelling. Over here girls — there's the sperm of sperms sitting next to the prick of pricks.

GENE: Look fellers I never meant to be a bother to anyone — you've got your snorkel with you have you?

STU: Yes.

ION: What about your voices — you heard voices this morning you were saying?

GENE: No well it's just p'raps that the way you speak has got a bit catching — it was just a sort of feeling while I was cleaning my teeth.

ION: Mate — that's all Joan of Arc had — sort of feelings while cleaning her teeth — but she kept at it — she didn't weaken — you don't read of Joan of Arc pissing off down to the beach snorkelling — she cleaned her teeth ten times a day — when they set light to her she had the finest set of gnashers in France.

GENE: So it's just a soppy holiday.

ION: No whatever it is it isn't that? — whether She comes or not, it's a Grand Great and Glorious Firework Display! — It's a Statment — it's advantage clowns! — Listen: I pick Lyons up and throw him at you and you fall of your chair — we take a snap of you falling off — nice effect — but what caused it — Lyons knocking into you! Ah Lyons is the cause — but wait a minute I picked Lyons up and slung him at you — Ah the Prophet Will — he's the cause of it all — but I only sling peevish hacks about because of hilariously unorthodox toilet training — and so on and we can trace the whole event through generations back through apes to puddle of primordial ooze — so cause don't enter into nothing — every moment is potential carnival! — race out! shriek on! and make joyful noise before the Lord.

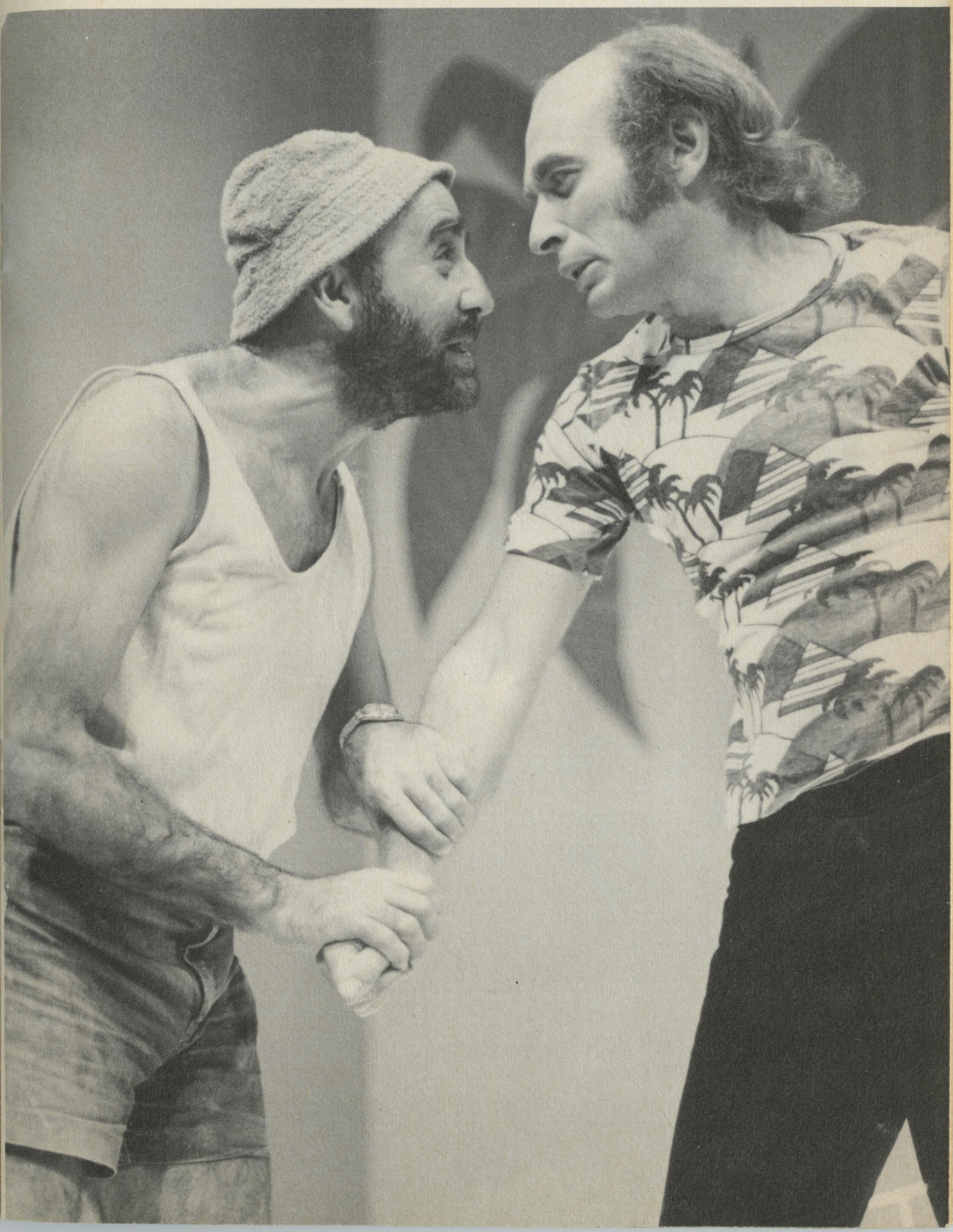
(Picks up STU and slings him at GENE as propounded.)

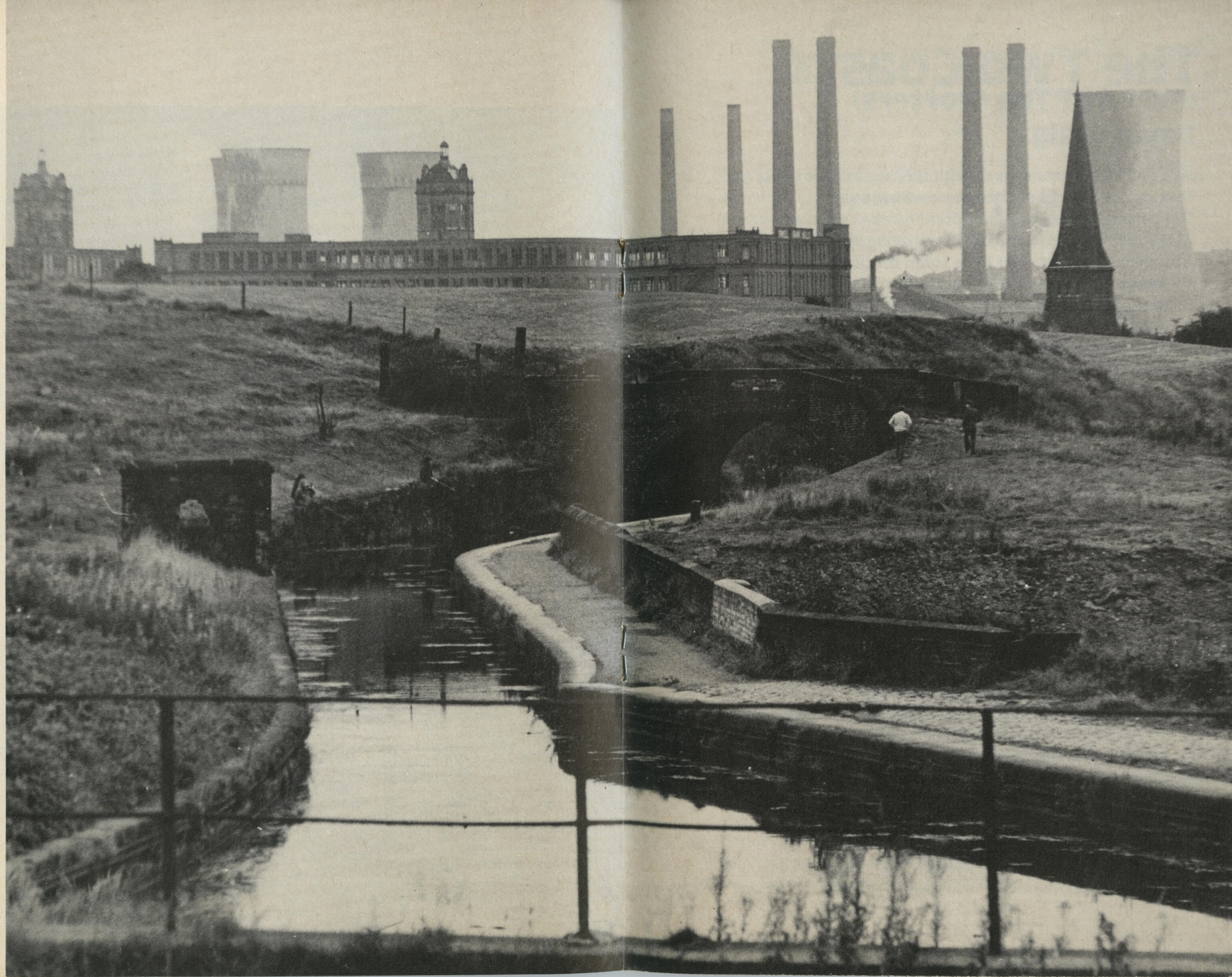
STU: O fuck all this.

ION: The inside poop is this, Lyons — the universe is unfinished — and how it goes is up for grabs — there's a war on and there's always been a war on and it's being fought across time and through the infinite dimensions of the universe — and it's clown versus sensibles — that's how it manifests itself in our humble 3D — 'Sensible people are up a tree' — and suddenly you want that man's wondrous canal spectacle to have been in vain! — He threw down his life that you might be a nit! — Must I labour solo to send the world bananas? — It's pigeon-holes, labellers, guardians of dogma, tidy frame of reference, return on my investment, one thing at a time men, their warning cry: 'That way lies madness' dribbling out in plummy tones from the jittery boredom that their conspiracy of mediocrity has led us into versus Firework Man — Homo Pyrotechnicus! — ever plumping for the preposterous — by their grotesqueries ye shall know them — I say we sit it out — JUST SAY SHE COMES — what do I say? — well he was here but he's just gone off snorkelling with Lyons — who are we? — What are we? — What's it all for? — *The Fearlessness of the Ferret Considered*: ferret sees everything as ferret — food is ferret to be, shit is ferret that was, and everything that is, everything that happens, is either for a ferret, or for a ferret soon — a finger 'tis a lively sausage, a trouser leg 'tis a tunnel of meat, so gnash on lads in all directions — Three Negroes kidnapped by Flying Saucer Folk in Eastern Brazil in 1964 — returned minus knackers and knobs — are we something's harvest and was that it sampling the crop? — Remnant of gin in glass (*referring to*

glass on another table) the alcohol content of result of us forcing little yeast germ animals to expire in their own shit — is that the schedule for us? — it certainly looks that way — in that case let us dive into our own shit and pollution waving and laughing in Captain Webb comedy trunks we're only here for the beer — clues to the human condition are to be found sitting here at this table — our bizarre quest continuing — not snorkelling with Lyons — and the crux of the promised poop Lyons is this: at certain rare moments the actions of a few people and the results of those actions can have undreamed of effects — it is the lot of a few to be at the hinge — the hinge of time — the hinge of history — the moment of moments which decides whether the whole show goes one way or the other — we have to stay here.

GENE: We have to stay here.





The Two Coasts

(Part 5 of The Crofters)

David Craig

My family had nothing to do with the Islands,
They came from the straight edge of Scotland,
The homing fishermen steered for the kirk
Where the bellrope flapped on the granite gable
And a model three-master hung above the pews.
My father's father steamed through the Firth
Between Stroma and Hoy where the nine tides clash,
He was hunting after the herring and the white-fish
In the deep-sea grounds between Iceland and Scotland,
The Islands were nothing but a blue shoal to southward.

'They're lazy, the crofters,' said a lowland farmer
Looking from the house at his fields filled with oats
And brimming with barley for his black beef stirks.
Summer sap teemed from the lime trees,
Strawberries glowed in his kitchen garden.
He'd never have seen the cold side of Harris
Where the crofters cleared from the western meadows
Perched between cliffs and starved for a century
Until the subsidies. Now they shake handfuls
Of lime grains onto the smallest loaning
That gives a green bite to the beasts in spring.
And John in Diabaig made a bad mouth
Remembering the women in their widow's black
Down on their knees to nip the last handfuls
Of hay with their hooks and glean it with their fingers.

If you want to know why the long boats rot
And the low tide licks inside their skeletons,
Count the names on the war memorial.
Bracken swarms on the summer shielings
Where the young couples went to make their marriages
And mind their flocks by midnight afterglow.
They left for Labrador, they leave for Australia,

The long gutter of the Great Glen
Splits our country, the tourists tear through
Across the black bog and past the battlefield
Where the low humps cover the clans.

They wait for us there, beyond the watershed,
Paradise and wilderness, the headlands, the islands
Like mounds of brown blossom moored on the Atlantic,
Hiding their harshness, giving out their gentleness,
My longing's harbour, my life's horizon.

Lament

What is that high sound in the air?
Is it the soom of water through the headlands?
The singing of the sand grains
On the white beach at Morar?
The blue blades of the grass
Make a harp of the dunes.
The long tune of the pipes
Should be chanting between the steep sides of Snizort.
The mad voice of God in 1805
Crazed their starving heads,
They threw their harps and fiddles on the bonfire.
The high sound in the air
Is nothing but the draught in cold chimneys
Drawing taut the note of longing
As I listen northwards.

The Very Latest Mark II 35-line Pigeon Poem with 2 Rhymes and 5 Slogans

A nice thing happened in July.
We have this lamp standard
Outside the house,
A well-designed elegant device,
Corpse-grey and angular,
A mass-produced bone
(Just the right size for lynching a very tall negro).

When the pigeons had finished
Bringing up their family,
They had time to spend on each other for a change.
They began having themselves days out
On top of our lamp standard.
They would arrive in the middle of the morning
And stroll around on its concrete top,
Perfectly at ease on the edge
Of a very
Long
Drop.

They spread their tails out, eyed each other fondly,
Cooed tenderly — they'd have held hands
If they had had any. They didn't mind
Being seen loving each other in public!
At their age! With a grown-up family!

They'll be back next year almost certainly
After bringing up some more pigeons.
There ought to be more of it, no street should lack
Its pair of pigeons enjoying their second honeymoons.
If you have a grain of political conscience,
You should demand that your local councillor
Fights for the pigeons of *your* city:
A FAIR DEAL FOR PIGEONS
HANDS OFF PIGEONS

HOMES FIT FOR PIGEONS

'I LIKE PIGEONS' BADGES FOR ALL SCHOOL CHILDREN
HELP OUR PIGEONS KEEP BRITAIN WHITE

You can make pigeons mean almost anything.
Become a pigeon-fancier — TONIGHT!

Old Man in Moor Lane

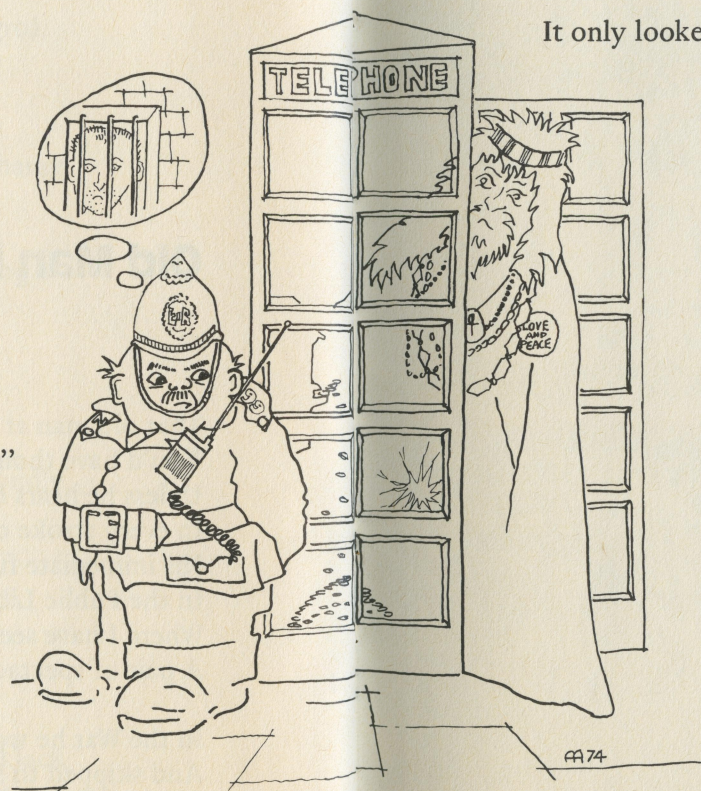
That old man at the corner with his ear cocked,
You'd have thought he'd have nothing more to expect,
Unless he hears his own last chime
In every stroke of nine.
His immediate future is a doze till noon
In the Public Library reading room
Where I have seen him using half
A pair of spectacles as a reading-glass.

In the War he wore his father's old suit
And skipped to school in charity boots.
In the twenties he came of age
And kicked his heels on the steps of the Labour Exchange.
In the Sixties it is too late
To spoon a second helping onto his plate
Or dole him a free bottle. Half warmed, half fed,
He will never inherit the earth now till he's dead.

A Cautionary Tale

Andy Andrews

I was standing in a phone-box
 Just the other day,
 Trying to make a call
 In the usual sort of way.
 I dialled the number
 And when the pips went,
 I tried to put the money in
 But it must have been bent —
 For the pips kept going,
 The whole thing was jammed
 So I tried to free it,
 And I banged it with my hand.
 I banged a little harder,
 Just to get my money out,
 When from behind me
 I heard a shout:
 "What d' you think you're doing,
 You vandal, you yob!
 I know you're trying to wreck it
 Or you're maybe out to rob,"
 Said the man in blue
 With the helmet on his head.
 "I was only trying to get my two pence back,"
 I said.
 "That's what they all say!"
 He said with a grin,
 "And now I'm afraid
 I shall have to run you in,
 And I suggest you come quietly
 For if you should resist,
 I might have to use a bit of force,"
 And he gave my arm a twist.
 I said, "You're making a big mistake.
 I've not broken any law!"
 He just tightened his grip on my arm
 And replied, "I've heard it all before.
 You'll be spending the night with us
 When I take you to see our sarge."

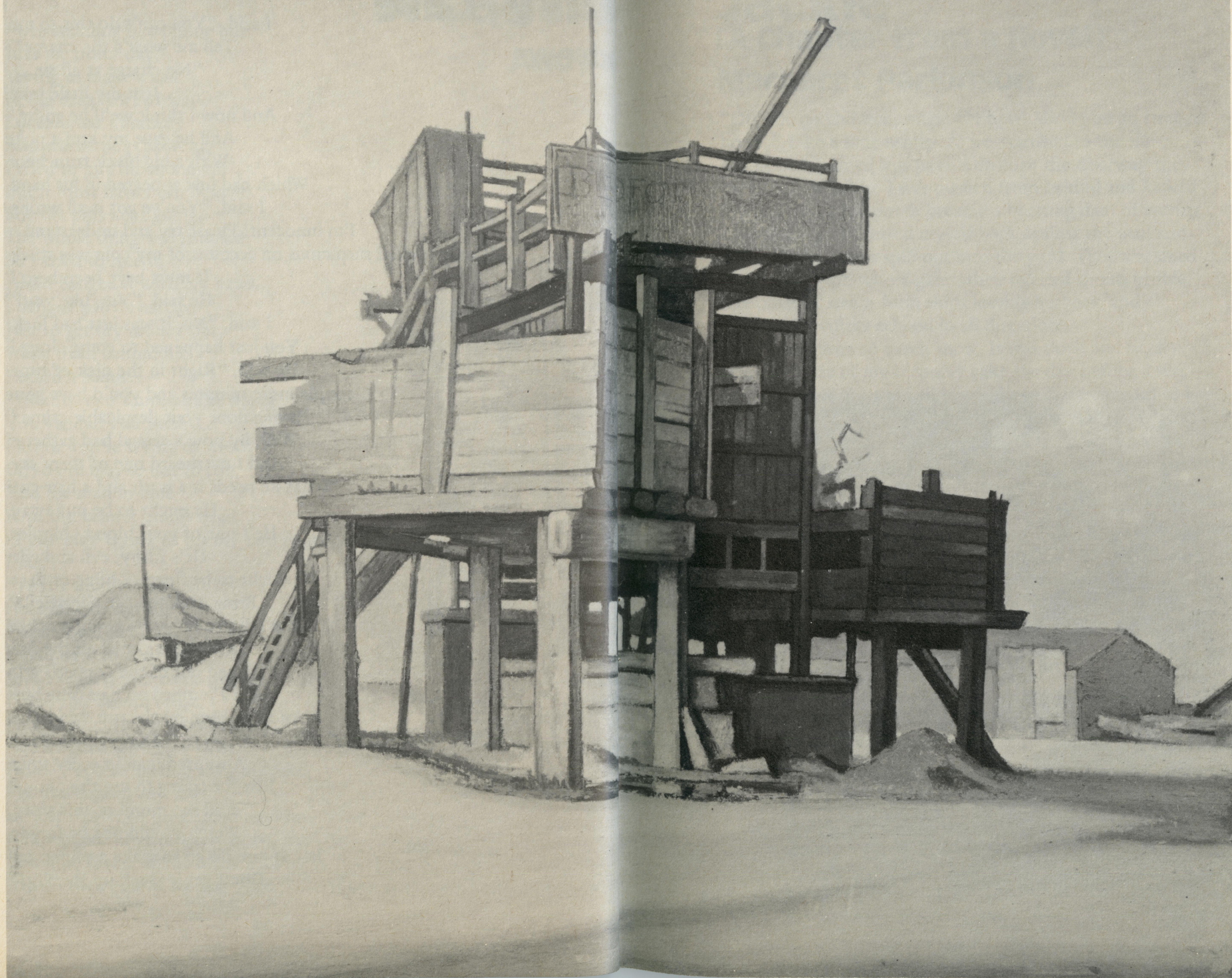


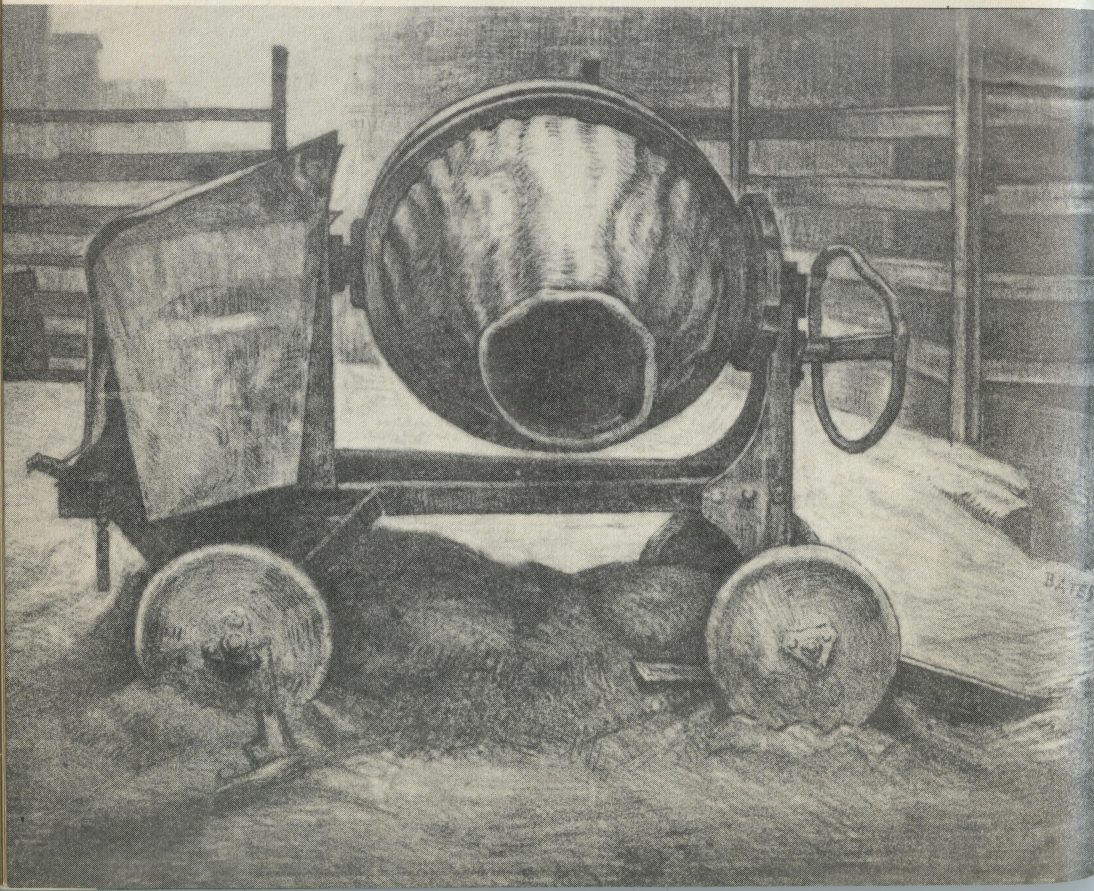
I said, "You can't do this to me.
 Tell me what's the charge?"
 "No charge at all sir . . .
 Just my little joke!
 And now I think we'll be going,"
 And he gave my arm a poke
 With a big black truncheon
 Which had just appeared in his hand.
 I said, "You've got it all wrong,
 I'm innocent! Please try and understand —
 It only looked suspicious on account of my coin was stuck.
 It must have been bent."
 He said, "Yes, like you!"

I said, "No, it was just bad luck!
 You just happened to come along."
 He said, "Right in the nick of time.
 A couple more minutes and you'd have gone
 Having done your despicable crime."
 Well, by now a crowd had gathered
 And I overheard one of them say,
 "What he needs is a wash and a hair-cut!"

He ought to be put away.
 He's one of your bloody hippies.
 He's filthy, evil and vile.
 He ought to be flogged, hung or shot.
 Bring back the cat, Sieg Heil!"
 Now I didn't fancy on being lynched
 So in the midst of all the fuss
 I slipped out of the copper's grip
 And I jumped on a passing bus.
 And I've been on the run ever since,
 Hungry and alone.

A wanted man in every town
 Just for trying to use the phone!
 And the moral of this story,
 Which should not be forgot,
 Is, "If you do go to make a phone call
 Don't get it stuck up the slot!"





Jackie

(A Chapter from a Novel)

Margaret Parkinson

“Off you go children, single file now. Mind you go straight home.” Like a long centipede we marched to the door, and as each pair of legs passed through the doorway they broke into a gallop. I was pushed from behind and kicked in the shins as the porch became a bursting dam of waving arms and legs. I pressed myself back against the wall and watched the others spill out into the yard. They streamed out through the school-gates, their excited shouts visible, like puffs of steam from ships leaving harbour, and whistle-like voices echoed in all directions.

I’d never seen so much snow. It was thick and sugary, reminding me of my birthday cake the day before. I was four years old then and didn’t feel any different, but as I stepped out into the yard to look for my brother, David, everything seemed to have changed. The rows of houses, beyond the school-gates, seemed much farther away; the soot and grime of narrow back-streets lay hidden beneath the blanket of snow, everything was fresh and clean. Even the old oak tree that stood like a sentry outside the gates, encircled by high spiked railing, had a less menacing appearance; the twisted branches and finger-like twigs were softened by fat caterpillars of snow.

I saw David at the far end of the yard. He stood alone, looking down at his sunken boots, hands thrust deep in his coat pockets. The Boys’ school loomed behind him and I saw the heads of older boys through some of the first floor windows. I trudged towards him, fumbling with my coat buttons, and David didn’t see me until I was almost under his nose. Then he smiled, and bit his lower lip with two large rabbit teeth. He took one hand from his pocket and his warm fingers curled around my own puffy hand.

“I’ll make a snowman when we get ’ome,” he said quietly, yet his voice was gruff.

I looked up at him and frowned. "It'll be dark then, David. I won't be able to see it. Can't we 'ave one at Grandma's instead?"

"Well. I'll see if she'll let us," he answered; and we stamped on the thick snow, making it squeak beneath our feet as we crossed to the school-gates.

Three boys were throwing snowballs just outside the gates, and David gripped my hand more tightly as we drew nearer. The hard white snowballs thudded against the sooty wall of the school and each thud was followed by a shout:

"Mine's higher'n yours."

"Is it 'ell as like."

"Bet ya daren't hit that winda then."

One of the boys scooped some snow from the pavement:

"Who daren't?" he yelled, as he quickly moulded a snowball.

"Right, get ready to run. I'll hit Ma Cohen's winda." As he leaned back to take aim, he noticed David and myself coming out of the gates. He stood still and stared at us with a strange expression in his eyes. One eye was almost colourless and seemed to stare right past us, but the other followed as David pulled me to the opposite side of the street. I saw him toss the snowball from one hand to the other, then he called to the two boys crouched behind the oak tree:

"Hey, look! There's King George, an' his little sister."

David gripped my hand tight and I felt his nails dig in my palm.

"Ooh, you're hurting me." I looked up at David's face, he was biting his lip and nodding his head slightly. He relaxed his fingers and pulled me along, quickening his pace.

"H'ya King George," yelled the odd-eyed boy.

"Are you the King?" said a second voice, and I turned and saw that two of the boys were following us, grinning and pulling at the tops of their balaclavas. They were dressed alike, had the same watery eyes and sneering mouths, but the one with odd eyes waved an arm to the third, who lingered behind:

"Come on lads. Let's pelt 'em."

I clung tight to David's coat. He kept blinking his eyes at the road ahead and his head nodded quickly as he tried to pull me along the pavement.

Suddenly, a third voice broke in: "Aw, leave 'em alone! They've done now't to you."

I peeped back under David's arm and saw the third boy, in a hooded gaberdine mac, pull at the arms of the other two, throwing one of them off balance. The boy with the strange staring eye pulled at the hood of the gaberdine as he slipped down into the snow.

To my surprise, two long, blonde plaits flew out as the hood fell back. I pulled on David's arm: "It's a girl, David. Look!" David stopped pulling me and glanced back over his shoulder.

"What ya do that for?" yelled the boy, squinting fiercely, as he picked himself up. "I'll do ya, for that." He clenched his fist at the girl, but she stared right back into his red face, and pushed the long plaits back inside the hood:

"They live near me, so leave 'em alone. Come on! Race you to Candy Cabin. Last buys a stick o' licorice."

She started running up the street, away from us, and without even a backward glance the two boys chased after her.

David's hand relaxed as we saw their heels kicking up the snow as they ran, shouting:

"First is the luckiest — Last is the muckiest."

We turned back and trudged toward the main road. David stopped me at the end of the pavement to look both ways.

"What d'you call that girl, David?" I asked. "Does she live down our street?"

David nodded and steered me across the slushy road. "I think her name's Jacqueline," he said, when we were safely on the other side. He let go of my hand and we turned down the street leading to our Grandmother's house.

My hands felt numb and I rubbed them together: "Jack-aleen. It's a funny name, I thought she were a boy. Is she in your class, David?"

David shook his head and pushed his hand deep into his pockets. I scraped some snow from the window-ledges as we passed and tried to form a snowball. My hands felt as if they were burning so I threw it quickly into the middle of the street where it silently disappeared, then I blew hard on my tingling fingers.

"Who were those boys, David? What did they call you a King for?"

"Oh, them!" he answered, kicking the snow up as he walked; "They're twins. They're in my class, but I don't take any notice of 'em."

"Twins?" I screwed my nose up. "What's twins, David?"

David sighed, the breath steamed out of his mouth:

"Don't you know anything? They're brothers, born at same time. They've got same birthday and look the same an'all."

"Well. *They* didn't look the same," I pouted. "*Wun* of 'em had a funny eye, it stared."

David grinned at me with his buck-teeth: "Oh, that's Dennis. He's got a glass eye. He can take it out and play

marbles with it."

"Ur, Yak," I said covering my eyes.

"It's true," said David. "It's only made of glass, silly, doesn't bleed or anything. He scares the kids at school with it though."

"Bet you're scared of 'im," I shouted. "You blinked your eyes when he called you a King."

David's face went red. We were at the end of the street and he held my elbow, looking both ways up the narrow road.

"She isn't scared of 'im anyway," I said.

"Who?"

"That girl. You know, Jack-wotser-name. *She's* not scared of them twins."

David shrugged his shoulders, and we crossed over the road.

Our Grandmother's house was crammed in the middle of a long row. I looked up at the chimneys, jutting out of the snow-covered rooftops, like cannons, shooting out smoke; already splattering the whiteness with their fall-out of soot.

I could smell the peppermint from the factory at the corner of the street, and heard the sound of machines, like a monotonous buzzing in my ears.

David rapped loudly on the iron knocker, sending an echo up the road. I looked up at the snow overlapping the guttering; the roof was so high it seemed to lean forwards, and I stood back quickly from the front door.

"It's gonna fall, David. Look!" I pointed up at the roof and David looked up with a jerk of his head.

"Don't be daft." He grinned at me, but stepped back too.

The door opened, with a groan, and our Grandmother's small, white head peered around it.

"Hello, Grandma," I said, squeezing past her in the narrow lobby. "It's been snowing, look."

"Aye. So I see," said Gran. "Come on, back here and get those boots off, you're treading it in 'carpet."

We kicked our boots off and banged them against the door-post.

"That's it. Shake 'snow off," she said. "Into kitchen now and get a warm."

She slammed the heavy door shut, muttering: "Shocking weather. All the woodwork's swollen."

I followed David through the long, dim passage into the warm kitchen. A log fire crackled in the grate and we laid our wellingtons in the hearth. There was a plate of freshly baked scones on the table; the smell of them made my mouth water.

Gran bustled into the kitchen, rubbing her hands together: "Come on now, you two," she said, undoing my coat buttons; "get them coats off and wash your 'ands. Then I'll brew 'tea."

David had already hung his coat behind the kitchen door. He'd found a comic under a cushion and held it under his arm while pouring water into the sink.

I held out my hands: "They're not mucky, Grandma."

"Mucky?" she said, as she hung my coat up. "Where do you learn such talk?"

She took my hands in her own and frowned: "But just look at 'em. All red and swollen. You've got chilblains."

"What's chil-brains?" I asked, as she sat me on the rocking-chair by the fire.

"Chil-blains!" shouted David. "Not chilbrains."

Gran reached over him and took a jar from the cupboard above the sink. She was only a head taller than David; I could just see his knee-socks between her thin legs. Her brown stockings were wrinkled around her

ankles. Her body was barrel-shaped, so her small head and scrawny neck stuck out of the printed pinafore like a tortoise's from its shell.

I warmed my hands and feet. They tingled as I watched the flames lick up the sooty chimney-back. I drew in my breath between my teeth, making a hissing sound, as my fingers and toes began to throb.

"Don't put them too near fire, lass," said Gran. She began tearing long strips from an old sheet. I sucked my lips in as the cloth ripped.

"Sets your teeth on edge, does it?" said Gran, laughing. There was another loud rip; then she gently peeled off my socks.

Gran clicked her tongue: "It's woollen socks you need, me lass." She unscrewed the lid from the jar. "I'd better knit you some tonight. There's an old jersey of your Grandad's I can pull out."

"When's Grandad coming home?" I asked, watching her plaster some yellow ointment on my feet.

Gran sighed: "Eeh lass. I told you yesterday, and every day last week. Grandad's gone for a long, long sleep."

I could see her pink scalp through the crisp, white curls as she loosely bandaged my toes. David was sitting in the armchair opposite, twisting a dark strand of his fringe around one finger while he gazed into the comic.

"David said Grandad's in hospital," I told her, as she started on my throbbing fingers.

Gran sat back on her heels for a moment, her blue eyes glazing over: "Maybe he thinks you're a bit young to understand. Come on now, let's get this done, then we'll get tea."

The yellow ointment was sticky and had a strange smell. I wrinkled my nose up and looked at the scones on the table:

"I won't be able to eat me tea, Grandma. I'm all sticky."

Gran just smiled, and wrapped the cloth around each finger separately.

"You'll manage," she said at last. "There, now."

The sky was turning red and seemed to light up the room. Gran's face and hair looked pink as she washed her hands and put the kettle on the gas-ring. I could see the sky in the face of the grandfather clock, and in the mirror of the sideboard, where my Grandfather's photograph stood. I couldn't see his face, the glass was shining and dazzled my eyes, but I knew he was smiling out at me through his curly white moustache.

There was a clink of china, and spoons rattled in the saucers as Gran brought the tray to the table. She poured some pale, yellow liquid into each cup from a small, flat bottle.

"What's that stuff?" I asked as she stirred the tea and placed the cup in my hands.

"Just something to get the circulation going." She smiled and she handed a cup and saucer to David. "Drink up now, then you can have a scone."

I gulped the tea noisily, then pulled a face. "Ur. It's 'orrible."

Gran frowned at me. "Try sipping it then. It'll do you good, like medicine. You want them toes better don't you?"

I sipped the tea slowly and soon began to feel warm and tingling all over. Gran was sitting on a hard-backed chair and didn't look very comfortable. Her hips hung over the sides and her thin legs dangled, barely touching the floor.

David put his cup and saucer back on the table and helped himself to a scone. Gran handed the plate to me and took the cup from my hands. "Good lass, that'll put

colour in your cheeks.”

I took a scone from the plate, choosing one with the most butter, and licked it.

“Now then,” said Gran, frowning, “eat the lot, mind.”

I licked the crumbs from my finger tips, sticking out of the bandages.

“Ur. That yellow stuff tastes ’orrible. What’s it called?”

Gran sighed. “It’s vaseline. You’re not supposed to lick it. It’s to stop your skin from cracking.” She started to put the cups and saucers back on the tray. “I think you’d best stay indoors awhile, till bad weather clears up. We’ll see what your mam says when she gets home from work”.

I sat up sharply and the rockers creaked:

“You mean I won’t ’ave to go to school?”

David looked up from his comic and moaned: “Aw no. She’s not getting out of school, again?”

“She can’t go out with swollen hands and feet, David,” said Gran, taking the tray over to the sink. “Chilblains can be very painful.”

David scowled at me through his fringe, then grunted and lowered his eyes to the comic: “She won’t be able to make a snowman then, either,” he muttered.

I suddenly remembered he’d promised to make one, before it grew dark; and Gran was already lighting the gas lamps on the wall, with a long coloured taper.

I leaned forward on the rocking chair: “Is it too late now, David?” I whispered. “Ask ’er. Go on.” But David was already far, far away, deep in some mysterious plot, printed in black shapes that were strange to me.

I sighed deeply and leaned back, listening to the sounds of water gushing into the bowl, the clatter of cups, and the sharp scrape of saucers on the draining tray. The pendulum in the tall clock swung jerkily, and when the water had gurgled down the drain, I could hear the low

tick, tock, and saw the minute hand jump a space.

"What time is it, Grandma?"

I watched her collect her reading glasses and a pair of scissors from the sideboard drawers, and she came back to her chair with a green jersey tucked under her arm.

"It's nearly time your Mam was here," she answered, glancing over her glasses at the clock. The scissors squeaked as she snipped up the seams of the jersey. I watched her, then looked at the photograph on the sideboard. I could see his smiling face and I smiled back:

"When *is* Grandad coming home then?"

Gran sighed heavily and stopped snipping.

"Margaret. How many times have I said? Grandad won't be coming home anymore. Your Mam told you he's gone to Heaven, didn't she?"

I shrugged my shoulders: "Well, where's Heaven, anyway? Is it further than Germany, where the war is? Daddy comes home, sometimes, from the war."

"Questions!" muttered Gran, frowning. "Why can't you sit quiet, like David there, and let me get on?"

I leaned back and rocked in the chair: "Well, I can't read like 'im. I've looked at that comic, it's all aeroplanes an' tanks."

As I rocked slowly, my fingers and toes didn't throb anymore. I felt warm and sleepy. The rockers creaked, and the scissors squeaked, and David grunted quietly as he read. I closed my eyes tight and the ticking of the clock seemed to grow louder, keeping time with a pounding inside my head.

I thought about my Grandfather, wishing that I was sitting on his knee again as we rocked in his chair. I missed the smell of tobacco, and the fast tick of his fob watch as I'd rest my head against his waistcoat; I missed the tickling moustache that would brush against my forehead

as he kissed my eyes to sleep. My eyes began to sting, and a lump grew large in my throat. She'd said he wouldn't be coming home anymore, but I couldn't believe her; not while I rocked in *his* chair and listened to the ticking of the grandfather clock. I saw him clearly in my mind's eye, smiling down through his busy white eyebrows and curly moustache.

My body felt heavy. I seemed to be sinking right into the rocking chair, becoming part of it. All the sounds in the room seemed far away. Long strips of bandages became entwined, like long plaits, and swung like a pendulum inside my head.

I thought about the girl, throwing snowballs at the school wall, and wondered if she had made a snowman at home. I could see her face, and her long, blonde plaits, but I couldn't remember her name.

I heard the faint chimes of the clock, then my Grandmother's distant voice, saying: "There! It's five o'clock. Your mam will be here, directly."

Then my brother's voice whispered:
"I think she's gone to sleep."



Left
We might as well get married and settle down here, 'cos we'll wait for fucking ever for a council house

Right
I used to be working class meself, but some bugger took the ladder away

Below
Sod the world and the one who made it, and pass the claret, vicar



Perspectives

Leon Rosselson

What do you feel? said the land to the far-mer, Sweat on my
brow, the far-mer re-plied. Sun on my skin, said the spring-time
lo-ver. Ball at my feet, the young boy cried. And the man whose
eyes were made to mea-sure, said proud to in-vest in a high yield ar-e -a,
con-crete and glass and a stake in the fu-ture. Now
look! The land is bro-ken by walls a wil-der-ness high, The
song is trapped on the turn-ta-ble, ev'-ry-one's queue-ing to buy, The
rest-less con-vey-or belt keeps the boy bu -sy from morn-ing till night.
So tell me who, after all, was right.

What do you feel? said the land to the farmer.
Sweat on my brow, the farmer replied,
Sun on my skin, said the springtime lover,
Ball at my feet, the young boy cried.

But the man whose eyes were made to measure,
Said, 'Proud to invest in a high-yield area,
Concrete and glass and a stake in the future.'

What do you hear? said the song to the singer.
Voice in the dark, the singer replied,
Rain in my heart, said the lovelorn hearer,
Jumping stars, the young boy cried.

But the man whose heart was made to measure,
Said, 'Ring-a-ding-ding of a million cash registers,
Making it big for a chart-topping future.'

What do you see? said the boy to his father.
Bundle of mischief, the father replied.
Still just a baby, said the loving mother.
I can run like the wind, the young boy cried.

But the man whose mind was made to measure,
Said, 'I.Q. subnormal, disturbed behaviour,
We'll grade him, we'll train him, we'll see to his future.'

Now look —
The land is broken by walls, a wilderness high,
The song is trapped on the turntable, everyone's queuing to buy,
The restless conveyor belt keeps the boy busy from morning till night,

So tell me,
Who, after all,
Was right?

Tim Maguire

Lit-tle Tim Mac - Guire loved to play with fire - ,
 Al - ways ha - ted wa - ter he - ver used to wash,
 Loved the smell of burn - ing, of bon - fires burn - ing,
 Loved to play all day with his lit - tle tin - der box.
 He chased the sparks as they flew in - to the eve - ning,
 Hailed the flash of light - ning and the burn - ing sun,
 'When I'm a man I'm going to be a fire - man,
 Then I can light a fire for ev - 'ry - one.

When he was four, they dressed him in a uniform,
 Sent him to school with iron railings all around.
 Hated the school and the rules and the railings,
 Took his little tinder box and burnt it to the ground.
 Oh how he laughed and sang in the firelight,
 Oh how he danced as the flames leapt to the sky,
 "When I'm a man, I'm going to be a fireman,
 Keep a bonfire burning until the day I die."

When Macguire grew older, they made him wear a bowler,
Sent him to work in an office in the town,
Hated the pens and the pins and the paper,
Had just one ambition, to burn the office down.
Oh Tim Macguire loved to play with fire,
Loved the blaze of roses and the golden grain,
Loved the leaves of Autumn, the red leaves of Autumn,
Loved a slender girl with a smile like a flame.

The Judge said at his trial, "Your behaviour has been vile,
You're a menace to society, though you may think you're big,
You'll have to go to prison" and then what a commotion,
For smoke and fire were pouring from out the Judge's wig.
Oh how he laughed and sang in the courtroom,
They took him down and locked him in the darkness of a cell,
Never saw the sun or heard the songbirds calling,
Saw the prison bars and heard the prison bell.

Then early one morning, just as the day was dawning,
A great wheel of fire span skywards from the jail,
The iron bars melted, the stone walls crumbled,
No-one in the prison lived to tell the tale,
No-one ever found Macguire's little tinder box,
No-one ever found a trace of Tim Macguire,
Perhaps he's up in heaven setting fire to angels' haloes,
Perhaps he's down in hell, dancing round the fire.

Oh Tim Macguire loved to play with fire,
Loved the blaze of roses and the golden grain,
Loved the leaves of Autumn, the red leaves of Autumn,
Loved the slender girl with a smile like a flame.

The Difficulties of Governing

Bertholt Brecht

1

The ministers are always announcing to the people
How difficult it is to govern. Without the ministers
Corn would grow into the ground instead of out of it.
Not one piece of coal would come out of the pit
If the Chancellor were not so wise. Without the

Minister of Propaganda

No woman would get herself pregnant. Without the
Minister for War

There would be no war. Indeed whether the sun would rise
in the morning

Without the approval of the Fuhrer
Is highly questionable, and if it did, then
It would be in the wrong place.

2

It is equally difficult, as they also tell us,
To run a factory. Without the owner
The walls would fall in and the machines
rust away, they say.

Even when a plough has been made somewhere
It would never get onto the field without
The clever words which the contractor writes to
the farm worker*: who

Could otherwise inform them, that there are no ploughs?
And what

Would happen to a farm without the owner? Certainly
Rye would be sown, where potatoes have already
been set.

*German 'Bauer' — literally small farmer or peasant.

3

If governing were easy
We wouldn't need such enlightened spirits as the Fuhrer.
If the worker knew, how to maintain his machine
And the farm worker could distinguish a field from
 a pastry board†
We should need neither factory owner nor
 farm owner.
Only because everyone is so stupid
Do we need a few, to be so clever.

4

Or could it perhaps be
That governing is only so difficult
Because the arts of exploitation and deception must be learnt?

†'Nudelbrett' — literally board for making noodles.

(From *Svendborger Poems* 1939)

On Hearing the News that a Mighty Statesman has been Taken III

If the indispensable man wrinkles his forehead
Two empires totter.
If the indispensable man dies
The world looks round like a mother with no milk for her child.
If the indispensable man were to return one week after his death
There wouldn't even be a porter's job for him in the whole empire.

(1944)

I, the Survivor

I know of course: simply by chance
I have outlived so many friends. But last night in a dream
I heard those friends talking about me, "Only the stronger survive"
And I hated myself

(1944)

Translated by Christine Diggins

FUTURE ISSUES WILL INCLUDE:

A new story by Archie Hill

A photo essay on Belfast by Jeff Merrifield and Nigel Gray

Songs by Andy Andrews

Poems by Adrian Mitchell

Excerpts from a series of plays on James Connolly, by

John Arden

and work by

Edward Bond

Yevgeny Yevtushenko

Kurt Vonnegut

Alan Bleasdale

Elizabeth Moyra Gordon

William Todd

Paula Hudspeth

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Annual rate £2.50 for 4 issues including p&p

Single issues 65p including p&p

Please make cheques payable to FIREWEED

and send orders to Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative

14 Talacre Road, London NW5 3PE.

I enclose £

please send to:

NAME

ADDRESS

.

On Hearing the News that a Mighty Statesman has been Taken

FUTURE ISSUES WILL INCLUDE

A new story of the life of the late statesman
A photo essay on the life of the late statesman
A new story of the life of the late statesman
A new story of the life of the late statesman
A new story of the life of the late statesman
A new story of the life of the late statesman

and more by
Edward Ford
Yakov Yermakov
Karl Yermakov
Alan Yermakov
Richard Yermakov
William Yermakov
Paul Yermakov

SUBSCRIPTION FORM
Annual rate £2.50 for 4 issues including p.p.
Single issues 6p including p.p. by air (extra 10p)
Orders to be sent to the publisher (no cash orders)
Orders to be sent to the publisher (no cash orders)
Orders to be sent to the publisher (no cash orders)
Orders to be sent to the publisher (no cash orders)

1944
Name
Address
City

ATKINSON
1944

AFTER DESCHOOLING, WHAT?

Ivan Illich

This pamphlet is a brilliantly argued follow-up to Illich's *Deschooling Society*. He writes that if deschooling is not simply to become an empty slogan then the whole concept of learning and growing-up as a programming process must be destroyed.

25p

THE STREET TO DAMASCUS

Richard Appignanesi

The first publication of a highly talented young poet. The street is the one leading from the dreary catechism-class of childhood to the holocaust.

'T. W. Adorno said: "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." Maybe. But to eat and sleep and make love could be deemed barbaric as well. What can we do? That's the way we're made. No one, not even the dead can stop us from living, sometimes even gracefully, sometimes even joyously and brilliantly; or from writing, as Appignanesi does, gracefully, brilliantly, sometimes even joyously.'

Arnold Wesker 24.1.75

30p

Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative
14 Talacre Road, London NW5 3PE



Fireweed No1 Spring 75

working class and socialist arts

Andy Andrews
David Bates
Bertholt Brecht
Ken Campbell
David Craig
Alan Heaps
Archie Hill
Pablo Neruda
Margaret Parkinson
Leon Rosselson
Colin Yates

Arnold Wesker

The first 1200 subscribers will get a free copy
of a Fireweed special publication:
Arnold Wesker's play, *The Journalists*

Cover 'Durham Miner' by
Elizabeth Moyra Gordon